Year 2
Direct Support Professional Training

Resource Guide

Session #7
Teaching Strategies: Personalizing Skill Development

Department of Education
and the
Regional Occupational Centers and Programs
in partnership with the
Department of Developmental Services

2000

List of Class Sessions

| Session	Topic	Time
1	Introduction and Supporting Choice: Identifying Preferences	3 hours
2	Person-Centered Planning and Services	3 hours
3	Person-Centered Planning and Services	3 hours
4	Communication, Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution	3 hours
5	Positive Behavior Support: Understanding Behavior as Communication	3 hours
6	Positive Behavior Support: Adapting Support Strategies to Ensure Success	3 hours
7	**Teaching Strategies: Personalizing Skill Development**	**3 hours**
8	Teaching Strategies: Ensuring Meaningful Life Skills	3 hours
9	Supporting Quality Life Transitions	3 hours
10	Wellness: Medication	3 hours
11	Wellness: Promoting Good Health	3 hours
12	Assessment	2 hours
	Total Class Sessions	**12**
	Total Class Time	**35 hours**

Key Words

In this session, the key words are:

- Most-to-Least Prompting Strategies

- Time-Delay Prompting

- Chaining

- Shaping

- Partial Participation

- Adaptive Technology and Environmental Adaptations

- Generalization

- Responsive Teaching

Information Brief

Personalizing Teaching by Using Different Strategies

Introduction. All of us — whether we have disabilities or not — like and respond to some teaching strategies better than others. We can make little changes to each of the basic teaching strategies we learned about in previous classes (that is, task analysis, least-to-most assistive prompting, reinforcement, error correction) based on an individual's response to each strategy, and how much he or she enjoys different approaches.
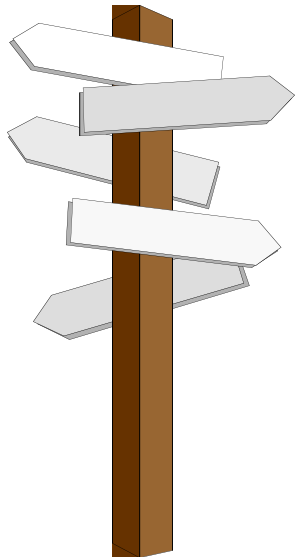
Your Notes

Most-To-Least Assistive Prompting.

One way we can change a teaching strategy is by how we provide assistance to an individual through prompting. For example, instead of using a least-to-most assistive prompt strategy, we can use a *most-to-least assistive* approach.

Most-to-least assistive prompting usually works best when an individual is highly motivated to learn how to do something that involves a lot of physical movement. This type of prompting is also best used with individuals who enjoy or do not mind physical guidance by the teacher.

In a most-to-least prompting approach, we prompt in the opposite manner from a least-to-most approach. **We first guide the individual through most or all of the skill and then provide less assistance on later attempts by the individual to do the skill.**

Your Notes

Time Delay Prompting.

Another way we can change a prompt to suit someone's learning style is through *time delay* prompting.

Time delay prompting is best suited for individuals who tend to become dependent on a teacher's help to complete a learning task. Time delay prompting can reduce an individual's reliance on teacher help to complete part of a skill. Using time delay, the first prompt such as a verbal direction is provided immediately when the natural cue to perform a task is provided. In teaching how to put on a cap for example, the natural cue would be the presence of the cap in front of the individual. This could be paired with a verbal prompt to pick up the cap. Using a time delay procedure, on the second teaching trial we would present the cap but wait a few seconds before we gave the verbal prompt. That is, we would *delay* the prompt.

Using time delay prompting, after a number of teaching trials with the delayed prompt, some individuals will begin to respond to the natural cue and pick up the cap *before* we give the verbal prompt. In this manner, the individual does not become dependent on our help to complete the task.

Keep in mind that often individuals need a number of trials before responding prior to the verbal prompt. It is also important to remember to reinforce the individual's response to the verbal prompt. The intent is for the individual to respond right away and not wait for the prompt in order to get the reinforcer quickly.

Your Notes

Chaining.

All of our teaching strategies have involved what is called a *whole task* teaching approach. That is, each time we teach the target skill, we teach all the steps that make up the whole skill — we teach each step in the task analysis.

For some individuals, the whole task approach may be too hard because of all the steps that the individual is attempting to learn how to do at one time. **In such cases, we can make the learning process easier through a teaching strategy called *chaining.***

With chaining, we teach skills to individuals one step at a time, and teach each step in a set order. By teaching each step one step at a time, we teach the individual a *chain* of steps or behaviors that when done in order, make up a useful skill. Each step in the skill is one part of the chain. The steps are linked together just as each part of a chain is linked to another part.

There are two types of chaining. In *forward chaining*, we teach each step in a skill in a forward manner. We teach how to do the skill by teaching the first step in the skill, then the second step, then the third, etc. We move forward through each step until the complete skill has been taught. **Remember though, we only teach one step at a time and only move to the next step in the chain after the individual can do the former step.**

In *backward chaining*, we start by teaching the *last* step in the chain, then the next-to-the-last step, etc., until all of the steps are taught.

Your Notes

In both forward and backward chaining, we teach with the same procedures we have talked about before such as prompting and reinforcement. However, we only teach one step in the skill at a time, and the order in which we teach each step differs based on whether we are using forward or backward chaining.
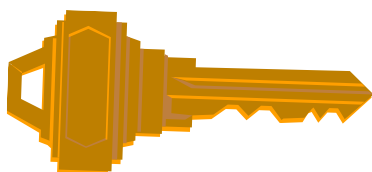
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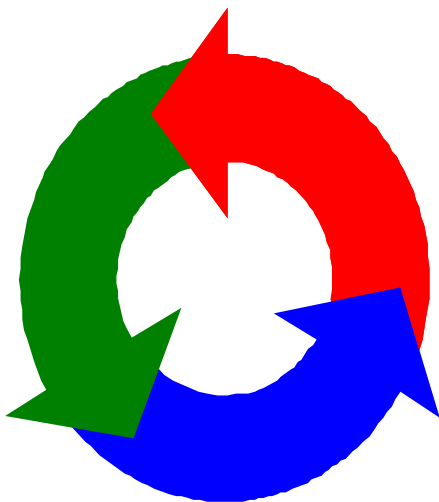
Shaping.

Another way to teach is called *shaping.* Shaping can be most useful with individuals who do not like to be prompted while learning to do a skill.

With shaping, we reinforce an individual's behavior as the behavior becomes more and more like the skill that we want to teach. At first, we reinforce any individual attempt to do the skill. On the next attempt, we reinforce only when the individual does the skill a little bit better. The end result of the shaping is that the reinforcer is provided only when the individual does the skill just right.

How can shaping be used to teach? Think about an individual who may be shy about trying new things. For example, the individual may be shy about sitting with visitors in the individual's home when the visitors are in a group in the living room. For a number of reasons, we would not want to force the individual to be with the group. Rather, we would want to teach the individual how to become part of the group in a way that is nice for the individual. Using shaping, we might first smile at the individual as she or he looks in on the group from the hallway. Next, as the individual walks by or closer to the room, we could say something nice to the individual. When the individual enters the room we would again say something nice and last, we would say something nice or praise only when the individual was in the group.

Your Notes

Partial Participation.

When thinking about all the teaching procedures we have talked about, a concern that comes up a lot is why should we spend time teaching when we know some of individuals will always need support to get through their day. That is, people wonder at times why we should teach something when it seems clear that an individual will never completely learn to do a certain task. It is of course true that we have not yet learned how to teach all things to all people. **Even when we do not know how to teach a given individual how to completely do an important skill, it can still be very useful to teach the individual how to do part of the skill by him or herself.**

Teaching how to do part of a skill allows a person to have more control over his or her life through what is called partial participation. Even when individuals do not know how to do everything related to an activity, their lives can be more enjoyable and independent if they learn the skills to partially participate in the activity.

Your Notes

Individuals with disabilities, just like everybody else, can enjoy many activities if they learn skills to allow them to participate in activities on a partial basis. Learning skills to partially participate can provide more opportunities to take part in desired and meaningful community activities along with friends, neighbors and family members.

Participating on a partial basis also makes it possible for more learning to occur through a type of cooperative teaching process. When individuals partially participate in an activity, they can learn more about the activity by watching and talking with other people who participate in the activity. Actually, individuals with whom we work learn many things by cooperating with peers, friends, support staff, etc., in doing activities.

Your Notes

Information Brief

Using Adaptive Technology and Environmental Adaptations to Assist with Teaching and Learning

In a lot of situations, we can increase the success of our teaching activities by using adaptive devices and environmental adaptations.

We can help individuals learn useful skills by making changes in their environment.

Adaptive devices and environmental adaptations are most often used for one or more of the following three reasons.

> **First, changes in the environment are used to make learning a skill easier for an individual.**

> **Second, environmental changes are used to help overcome certain steps in a skill that an individual cannot perform due to physical or sensory disabilities.**

> **Third, changes in the environment can help make the learning process more fun for the individual.**

Your Notes

When teaching certain skills to individuals, we sometimes observe that some steps in the task analysis are much harder for individuals to learn to do than are other steps. **We can make changes in the environment to make those hard steps easier for the individual to learn.** For example, when teaching an individual to put on his shoes, we may find that the individual can do all the steps except that he has a lot of trouble tying the shoe strings. We could make that step much easier by using shoes that have Velcro strips instead of shoe strings. On the other hand, we could eliminate the step of tying the shoe laces from the task analysis by using shoes (e.g., loafers) that do not have to be tied.

Sometimes individuals have problems learning a task not because it is hard to do a certain step but because they have trouble remembering when to do the step as part of the task analysis. This problem is likely with tasks such as jobs at a work site. Some jobs have many steps that must be done in order to do the job. **Picture cues can be used to help the individual remember when to do the task step.**

Picture cues involve hanging a picture of someone doing a step in the task analysis. As part of the teaching process, individuals can be taught to look at the picture as a reminder about what to do next in the task analysis. For many individuals, it can be helpful if we use pictures of them completing parts of a task as the picture cues.

Many of us use adaptive devices to help overcome physical or sensory impairments. For example, many of us wear glasses to help overcome problems with vision. We can help individuals in the

Your Notes

teaching process by making changes in the environment to overcome problems in completing certain steps in a task analysis due to physical or sensory problems.

Another way we use changes in the environment to help with the teaching process is to make learning a skill more fun for the individual. Some of us like to listen to music while we do a task, or we like to do tasks with friends. Doing things while we listen to music or with friends makes the tasks more fun for us. We can use the same general approach while teaching individuals important skills.

One good way to make a teaching task more fun for an individual is to include a lot of individual choice within the teaching process. For instance, if we wanted to help an individual learn how to zip a jacket, we could first involve the individual in buying a jacket that the individual really likes. The individual may then be more motivated to learn how to zip the jacket in order to wear it than if we simply selected a jacket for the individual for teaching purposes.

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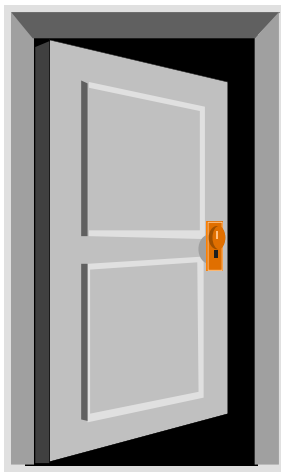
To use adaptive devices and environmental adaptations for any of these reasons, it can be helpful to follow several steps.

1. We look at our task analysis.

2. We review each step in the task analysis and decide if there is a way to change the environment to make the step easier, to eliminate the need for the step or to make the step more fun.

3. We make the changes identified in the second step of the process.

4. We try teaching the skill using the steps and then repeat steps one through three.

5. We repeat the entire process until we have made the teaching activity as easy and enjoyable as we can for the individual.

Your Notes

Information Brief
Developing and Using Generalization Strategies

Remember in our very first class on teaching strategies we talked about the purpose of teaching. **The reason we teach is to support individuals in learning to live as independently and enjoyably as possible.** In order to fulfill this purpose, we must make sure that when we teach a skill to an individual, the individual can use the skill in each situation the skill is needed. That is, the individual must be able to generalize the skill across situations.

Learning to generalize a skill means the individual can use the skill in each situation the individual needs the skill.

For the skill to be most useful the individual should be able to use the skill in the environments in which he or she lives, works or plays.

Learning to generalize skills across situations can be very hard for many individuals with disabilities. Because it can be hard to generalize newly learned skills, we must use procedures to teach the individual to generalize important skills – we must teach to generalize.

Teaching to generalize involves teaching the skill in different situations. The more situations in which we teach a skill, the easier it will be for the individual to then generalize and use the skill in new situations in which the individual may need the skill.

There are two main ways we can use different situations during the teaching process. This will help the individual learn to generalize the skill in new situations in which the individual may need to use the skill.

The first way is to include different situations (e.g., different teachers, different teaching materials, teaching in different locations) during all of the teaching process. This way is probably the best way to help an individual be able to generalize a newly learned skill. However, this way can also slow down the teaching process because it can make learning the skill harder at first. When first learning a skill, it can be hard at times to learn the skill if it is taught in so many different situations.

A second way to teach an individual to generalize a skill is to include different situations toward the end of the teaching process. That is, we first teach the skill to the individual in one situation (e.g., one or a small number of teachers, one set of teaching materials, teach in one location). Then, after the individual has learned to do the skill in the one teaching situation, we work with the individual in different situations, and teach as needed in those situations.

One good way to make sure we teach a skill in a manner such that the individual can use the skill in different situations is to make sure that we are teaching truly meaningful or functional skills.

Meaningful or functional skills are skills that people need in natural communities in which they live, work or play. We will talk a lot about making sure we teach meaningful or functional skills in a later class session.
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Your Notes

Information Brief

Assessing the Effectiveness of Teaching

In this class we have discussed a number of ways to teach. Usually, it is best to begin teaching by using the basic teaching procedures we began talking about in this and other classes on teaching strategies. **Remember the basic teaching strategies?**

First, we begin with a task analysis and then provide help to the individual to do each step in the task analysis by using a least-to-most assistive prompting approach.

We also reinforce the last step correctly completed and correct errors that may have occurred by an individual doing something other than the correct step.

After we have begun the teaching process, we can then change how we are teaching by using any of the procedures we have talked about in this class. **We decide whether to change how we are teaching by responding to what the individual is doing. We use responsive teaching.**

With responsive teaching, we watch how the individual responds to what we are doing, and then make changes in how we teach based on what we see the individual doing. We are responsive to what the individual is doing. In this way we can truly personalize our teaching strategies for each individual.

There are three key things we look for in order to make our teaching responsive and personalized.

The first thing we look for is how much the individual appears to like or dislike parts of our teaching approach. If we see that the individual does not like something we are doing, we try to change our approach to make it more enjoyable for the individual.

The second thing to look for in deciding whether we change our teaching process is how well the individual is learning the steps in the skill that we are teaching. One way to evaluate teaching effectiveness is to keep track over time of how many steps the individual is doing without any prompting or help from the teacher. If our records show that the individual is not completing more steps without teacher help, then we should change how we are teaching in order to bring about more progress.

The third thing to look for in deciding whether to change our teaching approach is how much the teacher likes the teaching strategy. Some of us like certain teaching strategies more than others. Usually we are better at teaching if we are using strategies that we like to use. If we find we are not very comfortable with a teching strategy, we should try other approaches until we find one that we like and feel good about using.

Your Notes

Key Word Dictionary
Teaching Strategies: Personalizing Skill Development
Session #7

Adaptive Technology and Environmental Adaptations

Objects and devices that are made or changed specifically to help an individual learn or do an important skill. For example, controls on a TV may be painted with colors to help an individual pick out the off/on button or the channel change button. Adaptive devices (also called environmental adaptations because they change or adapt the regular environment) can be used to make learning a new skill easier, to help an individual overcome a physical or sensory disability, or to make learning a new skill more fun.

Age Appropriate

Learning and doing things that are similar to what people without disabilities of the same age group usually do. When teaching skills to individuals with developmental disabilities, it is usually in the best interest of the individuals to teach skills that are the same skills that other people their age learn and do.

Chaining

Teaching one step in a skill at a time, and teaching each step in a set order.

Generalization

Learning to use a newly learned skill in whatever situation the individual needs or wants to use the skill. Generalization is an important part of teaching in that we want to help an individual *generalize* or apply the skill not only during the teaching situation, but in any situation the individual needs or wants to use the skill.

Most-to-Least Prompting Strategies

Using these strategies, you initially guide the individual through all of the steps and then provide less and less assistance on later attempts.

Partial Participation

Teaching or supporting an individual to participate in an activity even if the individual does not have the skills to do all of the activity, but has some of the skills to *partially* participate in the activity. Having opportunities to partially participate in an activity can help individuals enjoy their daily lives more and learn more skills.

Responsive Teaching

Teaching skills to an individual in a manner that is best suited to the individual. The exact way of teaching is based on how the individual *responds* to the teaching. Responsive teaching is a way to make sure the teaching is effective for the individual and that the individual likes the way the teaching occurs.

Shaping

Teaching a skill by reinforcing behaviors that appear closer and closer to the desired skill.

Time Delay Prompting

Initially provide a prompt when the natural cue to perform the task is presented and then delay the prompt a few seconds after the cue is presented on later trials.

If You Want to Read More About
Supporting Choice: Identifying Preferences

Bambara, L. M., & Koger, F. (1998).
Opportunities for Daily Choice Making. Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.

Belfiore, P. J., & Toro-Zambrana, W. (1994).
Recognizing Choices In Community Settings By People With Significant Disabilities. Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.

Everson, J. M., & Reid, D. H. (1999).
Person-centered Planning And Outcome Management: Maximizing Organizational Effectiveness In Supporting Quality Lifestyles Among People With Disabilities. Morganton, NC: Habilitative Management Consultants.

Parsons, M. B., Harper, V. B., Jensen, J. M., & Reid, D. H. (1997).
Assisting older adults with severe disabilities in expressing leisure preferences: A protocol for determining choice-making skills. Research in Developmental Disabilities, *18*, 113-126.

Worksheets and Activities

Optional Activity:
Teaching Situations

First name of individual to whom you would like to teach an important skill:

Skill to teach:

Situations in which the individual lives, works or plays and in which the person can use the skill to be taught:

Likely obstacles to overcome in teaching the individual to use the skill in the situations noted above: